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OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHAK #0376/01 0581127

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 271127Z FEB 08

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5377

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

RHMFIASS/39ABG CP INCIRLIK AB TU IMMEDIATE

RHMFIASS/425ABG IZMIR TU//CC// IMMEDIATE

RHMFIASS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE

RHMFIASS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE

RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// IMMEDIATE

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU//TCH// IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA//

RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 000376

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2028

TAGS: PREL MOPS MARR PTER TU IZ

SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ SITREP 6: DAY 5 OF GROUND OPERATIONS

REF: A. ANKARA 0354 AND PREVIOUS

1B. ANKARA 0366

Classified By: A/DCM Kim DeBlauw for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Turkish ground troops continued to receive air and artillery support on February 26, despite poor weather conditions. Weather in the objective area is expected to improve over the next 24-48 hours. Normal logistics and customs operations continue at Habur Gate.

12. (U) A Turkish General Staff (TGS) statement on February 27 stated that 77 PKK were killed the night of February 26-27 in the heaviest fighting to date. Meanwhile, five Turkish soldiers lost their lives. Improving weather has facilitated Turkish reinforcement and re-supply operations, according to the announcement.

13. (U) Previously, a TGS statement issued February 26 stated that a heavy blizzard had limited operations. TGS reported two soldiers killed by sniper fire during the night of February 25; the number of PKK killed had not been determined due to adverse weather conditions. The statement noted intelligence reports that wounded terrorists are being treated at hospitals in northern Iraq. TGS also stated that the PKK is using false news reports, including faked images of a downed helicopter, to boost its morale. The helicopter images, TGS noted, were clearly not taken during the winter and actually belong to a helicopter that crashed in May 1997.

14. (U) News coverage on the ground operations in northern Iraq continues. All media noted the GOI's condemnation of the CBO, calling for an immediate and complete withdrawal. Mainstream Hurriyet reported the number of terrorists killed has reached 192. The paper pointed to claims that the terrorists are using U.S.-made Stinger missiles to try to shoot down helicopters. Other items in the PKK arsenal, Hurriyet added, include 60 and 82mm mortars, 12.7 mm Dorcka anti-aircraft guns, BKC heavy machine guns, M-16s, and SAM-7 missiles. Hurriyet also reported PKK rebels were overheard saying, "We can't escape, we are in a tight corner." Business newspaper Referans noted some large Turkish firms have halted deliveries of some goods to southeastern and eastern Turkey due to the ongoing operations in northern Iraq. In response to a TGS announcement, Islamist-oriented, pro-government Yeni Safak reported that regional government authorities in northern Iraq denied treating wounded terrorists and stated their hospitals were open to inspection. Mainstream tabloid Aksam wrote, "1000 Iraqi

troops have moved up to the north in order to set up a buffer zone."

¶15. (U) Gulenist Zaman reported that Joint Chiefs of Staff Operations Director LTG Carter Ham stated that the Turkish military did not seek Washington's approval to launch the campaign, nor did Washington expect the Turkish military to do so given the nature of their relationship. Liberal Radikal quoted Undersecretary of State Burns as stating, "Since the PKK has gotten established in Iraq, we want to see a process along which Kurdish leaders in Iraq take responsibility to limit PKK's impact." Newspapers reported that up to 1000 Turkish Kurds demonstrated in Van against the ground operations on February 26. All these items were widely carried on radio and television as well.

¶16. (U) According to the press, opposition Nationalist Action Party (MHP) Chairman Devlet Bahceli has urged that Turkish troops stay in northern Iraq until a tangible result can be seen. He stated, "Considering safeguarding and support from Barzani, it is obvious that escaping terrorists will take refuge in the Peshmerge. That's why the government must impose economic and political sanctions on the region." Bahceli also advocated the creation of a "security zone" as Turkish forces leave the region. (Note: Bahceli's ultra-nationalist MHP is the sole political voice calling for such action. End note.) Republican People's Party (CHP) Chairman Deniz Baykal said the troops should all return to Turkey when they have accomplished their objectives.

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